

that the thing was 'probably a butterfly' which was laying the 'little orange balls' on a pair of underpants hanging on a washing line, (happily, it seems, her husband was not wearing the garment at the time!). Having never seen a two-inch long clothes moth I decided to take my life in my hands and call upon the lady, at Manor Park in East London. With some not inconsiderable trepidation I knocked upon the door and was promptly taken through the house to the rear garden where a pair of white underpants were hanging alone on the washing line some two metres above the ground. To my surprise, (and great relief), there was within the garment a female leopard moth *Zeuzera pyrina* L. busily ovipositing.

Having travelled all the way here I felt moved to adopt a slightly more scientific approach to the situation and eventually persuaded the lady to allow me to borrow the moth and underpants complete for further examination. The garment was manufactured from that type of white material which contains numerous small holes of about 1-2 mm diameter, and the moth was sitting in the crutch with its ovipositor extended some 15mm through one of the holes, waving it around until it made contact with the material beyond whereupon a mass of approximately 200 eggs was laid between two layers of material. In all five such masses were laid, together with two or three smaller clusters of two or three eggs, amounting to a total of 1,023 eggs in all from the arrival of the moth on the cloth in the morning of 9th July, to some time between 1700 and 2000 hours on the next day. During this period, including overnight, the oviposition was a more or less continual process interrupted by longer resting periods. Regrettably, other commitments prevented continual observation.

Presumably the moth mistakenly confused the holes in the cloth as insect holes in a tree branch, although quite why it should do this on a pure white garment hanging two metres above a lawn is a bit of a mystery. True, the method by which any insect selects its correct larval food-plant appears to be incompletely understood: Perhaps oviposition is in any event a random process in this particular species, the law of averages dictating that at least some eggs will be laid in the correct place. It should be noted that the eggs were fertile, those few which were not preserved hatching on 22nd July some eleven or twelve days after laying.

The moth, still laying, was exhibited at the General Meeting of the London Natural History Society on 9th July 1986. COLIN W. PLANT, Passmore Edwards Museum, Romford Road, Stratford, London E15 4LZ.

A WHITE BRIMSTONE MOTH — I would like to record the capture of *Opisthograptis luteolata* ab. *albescens* on 3rd August 1986 in my garden. The moth was photographed before release. R. T. LOWE, 61 Erskine Hill, London, NW11.